

DERWENT-ACC-NO: 2000-629735

DERWENT-WEEK: 200061

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TITLE: Output tray selection for printer has
computer interface
and tray sensors allowing computer to detect
status of
each tray and select tray for use

INVENTOR: AMIMOTO, M; NAKANO, M ; SUGITA, S

PRIORITY-DATA: 1993JP-0337466 (December 28, 1993)

PATENT-FAMILY:

PUB-NO	PUB-DATE	LANGUAGE
PAGES	MAIN-IPC	
EP 1045294 A2 G03G 015/00	October 18, 2000	E 011

INT-CL (IPC): G03G015/00

ABSTRACTED-PUB-NO: EP 1045294A

BASIC-ABSTRACT:

NOVELTY - A printer (1) is connected (16) to a personal

computer (8). The computer sends image data for the printer to print. The printer has a number of output trays, e.g. three. Each tray has a sensor (2-4) to detect if it currently holds any paper. The computer can obtain from the printer, the status of each of these trays for presentation to the operator via a display (12). The operator can instruct the computer to send a command to the printer to select an output tray.

USE - Printer output tray selection by remote computer

ADVANTAGE - Allows the operator to remotely view and control the selection of printer output tray

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWING(S) - Printing system

Printer 1

Output tray sensors 2-4

Personal computer 8

----- KWIC -----

Basic Abstract Text - ABTX (1):

NOVELTY - A printer (1) is connected (16) to a personal

computer (8). The computer sends image data for the printer to print. The printer has a number of output trays, e.g. three. Each tray has a sensor (2-4) to detect if it currently holds any paper. The computer can obtain from the printer, the status of each of these trays for presentation to the operator via a display (12). The operator can instruct the computer to send a command to the printer to select an output tray.

Basic Abstract Text - ABTX (2):

USE - Printer output tray selection by remote computer

Basic Abstract Text - ABTX (3):

ADVANTAGE - Allows the operator to remotely view and control the selection of printer output tray

Basic Abstract Text - ABTX (5):

Printer 1

Title - TIX (1):

Output tray selection for printer has computer interface and tray sensors allowing computer to detect status of each tray and select tray for use



(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11) EP 0 996 038 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
26.04.2000 Bulletin 2000/17

(51) Int. Cl.⁷: G03G 15/00

(21) Application number: 99121248.1

(22) Date of filing: 27.12.1994

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB IT

• Nakano, Masaki
Ohta-ku, Tokyo (JP)
• Amimoto, Mitsuru
Ohta-ku, Tokyo (JP)

(30) Priority: 28.12.1993 JP 33746693

(62) Document number(s) of the earlier application(s) in accordance with Art. 76 EPC:
94120757.3 / 0 661 600

(74) Representative:
Pellmann, Hans-Bernd, Dipl.-Ing. et al
Patentanwaltsbüro
Tiedtke-Bühling-Kinne & Partner
Bavarlarling 4
80336 München (DE)

(71) Applicant:
CANON KABUSHIKI KAISHA
Ohta-ku Tokyo 146-8501 (JP)

Remarks:

This application was filed on 25 - 10 - 1999 as a divisional application to the application mentioned under INID code 62.

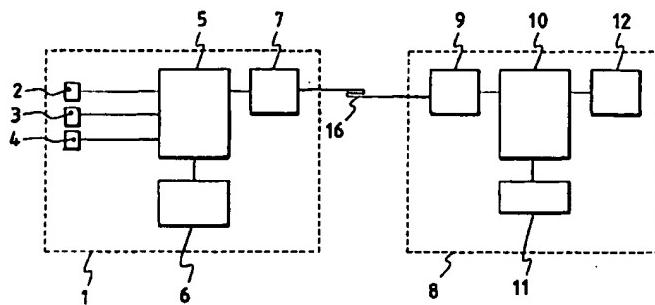
(72) Inventors:
• Sugita, Shigeru
Ohta-ku, Tokyo (JP)

(54) Image forming system in which image processing apparatus is connected to image forming apparatus

(57) An image forming system, of the present invention, which has an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a paper sheet in accordance with image data output from a computer includes a plurality of storage units, provided to the image forming apparatus, for storing the paper sheet, a plurality of detecting units for detecting the paper sheet on each of the plurality of storage units, a display unit, provided to the computer for displaying a detection result from each of the plurality of detecting units, an input unit, provided to the com-

puter, for inputting an instruction for selecting the storage unit, and a control unit, provided to the image forming apparatus, for selecting the storage unit in accordance with the instruction input from the input unit. With this arrangement, the operator of the computer can detect the sheet storage status of the storage unit while staying in front of the computer, thereby selecting a desired storage unit.

FIG. 1



EP 0 996 038 A1

Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****Field of the Invention**

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[0001] The present invention relates to an image forming system in which an image processing apparatus is connected to an image forming apparatus.

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Related Background Art

[0002] Conventionally, an image formed by a personal computer or the like is printed out by a printer. However, such a printer has only one ejecting paper tray and cannot sort printed recording paper sheets. A printer has been proposed which is connected to a sorter so as to sort printed recording paper sheets. However, such a printer only controls the storage destination in the sorter from the printer side. An operator operating in front of a personal computer has no means for detecting a specific storage unit in the sorter, resulting in difficulty in finding recorded paper sheets destined for the operator.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] It is an object of the present invention to provide an image forming system for solving the above problem.

[0004] It is another object of the present invention to provide an image forming system in which an operator can detect the status of each storage unit of an image forming apparatus from an image processing apparatus side, thereby selecting the storage unit.

[0005] It is still another object of the present invention to provide an image forming system in which an operator at an image processing apparatus can certify an automatically selected storage unit of an image forming apparatus.

[0006] It is still another object of the present invention to provide an image forming system in which the operator at an image processing apparatus can change an automatically selected storage unit of an image forming apparatus.

[0007] Other objects and features of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**[0008]**

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing an image forming system of an embodiment of the present invention; Fig. 2 is a view showing the outer appearance of the image forming system; Fig. 3 is a view for explaining a communication

operation of the image forming system;

Fig. 4 is a view for explaining a communication operation of the image forming system;

Fig. 5 is a view for explaining a communication operation of the image forming system;

Fig. 6 is a view for explaining a communication operation of the image forming system; and

Fig. 7 is a view for explaining a communication operation of the image forming system.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**[First Embodiment]**

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[0009] Figs. 1 to 3 are views showing the first embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Figs. 1 and 2, an image forming apparatus 1 records image data from a computer 8. A sensor 2 detects the presence/absence of recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 13. A sensor 3 detects the presence/absence of recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 14. A sensor 4 detects the presence/absence of recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 15. A control circuit 5 controls all operations in the image forming apparatus, including processing of signals from the sensors 3 to 4. An ejecting paper tray switching unit 6 switches the ejecting paper tray for receiving recording paper sheets in accordance with a signal from the control circuit. An interface (I/F) 7 on the image forming apparatus side connects the image forming apparatus 1 to the computer 8 through communication. The computer 8 generates or stores image data. An interface (I/F) 9 on the computer 8 side connects the image forming apparatus 1 to the computer 8 through communication. A CPU 10 controls the computer 8. A keyboard 11 is used by an operator to input an instruction to the computer 8. A CRT 12 serves as the display unit of the computer 8. The ejecting paper tray 13 serves as one of the storage units for storing recording paper sheets. The ejecting paper tray 14 serves as one of the storage units for storing recording paper sheets. The ejecting paper tray 15 serves as one of the storage units for storing recording paper sheets. A cable 16 connects the image forming apparatus 1 to the computer 8 for communication. Recording paper sheets 17 are selectively ejected onto the ejecting paper trays. The operation of the first embodiment is sequentially described in Fig. 3.

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[0010] The operation in the above arrangement will be described below with reference to Fig. 3.

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[0011] When an image generated or stored in the computer 8 is to be printed out, the operator inputs a print instruction from the keyboard 11 to the computer 8. Upon reception of this instruction, the CPU 10 of the computer 8 transmits a printer occupancy command to the image forming apparatus 1 through the I/F 9. Upon reception of the printer occupancy command through the I/F 7, the control circuit 5 of the image forming appa-

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ratus 1 certifies the occupancy status of the image forming apparatus itself. If a recording enable state is set, a command for permission of occupancy is transmitted to the computer 8 (at this time, if the image forming apparatus is connected to a plurality of computers, and recording of an image from one of the remaining computers is being performed, or if the image forming apparatus singly has a copy function, and a copying operation is being performed, a command for rejection of occupancy is sent. However, this status is not the subject matter, and a detailed description thereof will be omitted).

[0012] Upon reception of the command for permission of occupancy, the computer 8 sends a status request to grasp the status of the image forming apparatus 1. Upon reception of the status request, the image forming apparatus 1 sends a status containing information of the presence/absence of recording paper sheets on each ejecting paper tray. Upon reception of this status, the computer 8 indicates the status of each ejecting paper tray on the CRT 12, thereby prompting the operator to select an ejecting paper tray. In Fig. 2, the recording paper sheets are present on the ejecting paper tray 13. Therefore, the status indication of the ejecting paper tray 13 is the "presence of recording paper sheets", and the status indication of the ejecting paper trays 14 and 15 is the "absence of recording paper sheets". Upon checking the indication, the operator selects the ejecting paper tray 14 or 15 when the recording paper sheets are to be stored on an available ejecting paper tray, and inputs a designation of the ejecting paper tray from the keyboard 11 to the computer 8. In this case, assume that the ejecting paper tray 14 is selected. Upon reception of the designation of the ejecting paper tray, the computer 8 transmits a command for designation of the ejecting paper tray to the image forming apparatus 1 such that the recording paper sheets are output onto the ejecting paper tray 14. Upon reception of the command for designation of the ejecting paper tray, the control circuit 5 sends a signal to the ejecting paper tray switching unit 6. The ejecting paper tray switching unit 6 switches a convey path (not shown) to the ejecting paper tray such that the recording paper sheets are ejected onto the ejecting paper tray 14. The computer 8 transmits the image data to the image forming apparatus 1 during this time, though no problem is posed because a time required for switching of the convey path is sufficiently shorter than that required from reception of the image data to the end of print. Upon reception of the image data, the image forming apparatus executes print and stores the recording paper sheets on the designated ejecting paper tray 14.

[Second Embodiment]

[0013] Figs. 1, 2, and 4 are views showing the second embodiment. A description of Figs. 1 and 2 is the same as that in the first embodiment and will be omitted.

[0014] A description will be made with reference to Fig. 4. An operation before reception of a status signal by a computer 8 is the same as that in the first embodiment, and a detailed description thereof will be omitted. 5 An operation after reception of the status by the computer 8 will be described. Upon reception of the status, the computer 8 automatically selects an available ejecting paper tray and transmits a command for designation of the ejecting paper tray to an image forming apparatus 1. 10 Upon reception of the command for designation of the ejecting paper tray, a control circuit 5 in the image forming apparatus 1 sends a selection signal to an ejecting paper tray switching unit 6. The ejecting paper tray switching unit 6 switches a convey path to the ejecting paper tray such that recording paper sheets are ejected onto an ejecting paper tray 14. The computer 8 transmits image data to the image forming apparatus 1 during this time, and at the same time, indicates the 15 ejecting paper tray number selected by the computer 8 on a CRT 12, thereby informing an operator of the ejecting paper tray for receiving the recording paper sheets. Upon reception of the image data, the image forming apparatus 1 executes print and ejects the recording paper sheets onto the ejecting paper tray 14.

[Third Embodiment]

[0015] Figs. 1, 2, and 5 are views showing the third embodiment. A description of Figs. 1 and 2 is the same as that in the first embodiment and will be omitted. In Fig. 5, an operation from reception of a status signal by a computer 8 to automatic selection of an available tray is the same as that in the second embodiment, and a detailed description thereof will be omitted. The subsequent operation will be described with reference to Fig. 5.

[0016] Upon selection of the ejecting paper tray, the computer 8 indicates the selection result and the status of each ejecting paper tray on a CRT 12, thereby requesting an operator for certification. Upon checking the indication, the operator inputs data representing acknowledgement or change of selection of the ejecting paper tray selected by the computer 8 from a keyboard 11. The computer 8 transmits a command for designation of the ejecting paper tray to an image forming apparatus 1 in accordance with the data input from the keyboard 11. Thereafter, the same operation as that in the first embodiment is performed to store recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 14.

[Fourth Embodiment]

[0017] Figs. 1, 2, and 6 are views showing the fourth embodiment. A description of Figs. 1 and 2 is the same as that in the first embodiment and will be omitted. An operation before transmission of a command for permission of occupancy by an image forming apparatus 1 is the same as that in the first embodiment. The subse-

quent operation will be described with reference to Fig. 6.

[0018] Upon transmission of the command for permission of occupancy, a control circuit 5 automatically selects an available ejecting paper tray and sends a selection signal to an ejecting paper tray switching unit 6. The ejecting paper tray switching unit 6 switches a convey path such that recording paper sheets are ejected onto the selected ejecting paper tray and transmits data representing the selection result to a computer 8. Upon reception of the data representing the selection result, the computer 8 indicates the selection result on a CRT 12 in accordance with the data to inform an operator of it, and sends image data to the image forming apparatus 1.

[0019] Thereafter, the same operation as that in the first embodiment is performed to store the recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 14.

[Fifth Embodiment]

[0020] Figs. 1, 2, and 7 are views showing the fifth embodiment. A description of Figs. 1 and 2 is the same as that in the first embodiment and will be omitted. An operation before reception of data representing the selection result of an ejecting paper tray is the same as that in the fourth embodiment, and a detailed description thereof will be omitted. The subsequent operation will be described with reference to Fig. 7.

[0021] Upon reception of the data representing the selection result, a computer 8 indicates the selection result on a CRT 12, thereby requesting an operator for certification.

[0022] Thereafter, the same operation as that in the third embodiment is performed to store recording paper sheets on an ejecting paper tray 14.

[0023] In the above embodiments, the image forming apparatus has been described as a printer. However, it is not limited to a printer and may also be applied to a copying machine or the like having a facsimile communication function. In the above embodiments, a single computer and a single printer are used for the descriptive convenience. However, a plurality of computers and printers connected with each other in a LAN may also be used. The computer and the image forming apparatus may also be set at different locations.

[0024] As has been described above, available recording paper sheet storage units can be detected, and the information can be transmitted to a computer or the like to designate a storage unit from the computer or the like. With this arrangement, the conventional problem can be solved, thereby realizing an image forming system having excellent operability.

[0025] The present invention can be applied to selection of a sheet feeding unit in an image forming apparatus. More specifically, the presence/absence or size of sheets in a plurality of feeding units is detected. The detection result is indicated on the CRT of a com-

puter. An operator is prompted to select a feeding unit, or the image forming apparatus or the computer automatically selects a feeding unit. The selected feeding unit and the detection result may be indicated on the CRT of the computer.

[0026] In addition, the feeding unit automatically selected by the image forming apparatus or the computer may be changed by operating the keyboard of the computer.

[0027] An image forming system, of the present invention which has an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a paper sheet in accordance with image data output from a computer includes a plurality of storage units, provided to the image forming apparatus, for storing the paper sheet, a plurality of detecting units for detecting the paper sheet on each of the plurality of storage units, a display unit, provided to the computer for displaying a detection result from each of the plurality of detecting units, an input unit, provided to the computer, for inputting an instruction for selecting the storage unit, and a control unit, provided to the image forming apparatus, for selecting the storage unit in accordance with the instruction input from the input unit. With this arrangement, the operator of the computer can detect the sheet storage status of the storage unit while staying in front of the computer, thereby selecting a desired storage unit.

[0028] An image forming system, of the present invention, which has an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a paper sheet in accordance with image data output from a computer includes a plurality of storage units, provided to the image forming apparatus, for storing the paper sheet, a plurality of detecting units for detecting the paper sheet on each of the plurality of storage units, a display unit, provided to the computer for displaying a detection result from each of the plurality of detecting units, an input unit, provided to the computer, for inputting an instruction for selecting the storage unit, and a control unit, provided to the image forming apparatus, for selecting the storage unit in accordance with the instruction input from the input unit. With this arrangement, the operator of the computer can detect the sheet storage status of the storage unit while staying in front of the computer, thereby selecting a desired storage unit.

Claims

1. A control method for an image forming system having an image forming apparatus which has image forming means for forming an image on a paper sheet in accordance with image data output from an image processing apparatus and a plurality of storage means for storing the paper sheet, comprising the steps of:

inputting a detection result of the paper sheet on each of the plurality of storage means from

- the image forming apparatus;
displaying the detection result in the image processing apparatus;
inputting an instruction for selecting the storage means in the image processing apparatus by an operator; and
outputting a command for selecting the storage means in accordance with the input instruction to the image forming apparatus.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the storage means stores the paper sheet on which an image is formed, and the step of detecting comprises detecting the presence/absence of the sheet on the storage means.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the storage means stores the paper sheet on which an image is not formed, and the step of detecting comprises detecting the presence/absence of the paper sheet on the storage means.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the storage means stores the paper sheet on which an image is not formed, and the step of detecting comprises detecting the size of the paper sheet stored on the storage means.
5. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of outputting a command to know the state of the image forming apparatus to the image forming apparatus before said detection result inputting step.

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FIG. 1

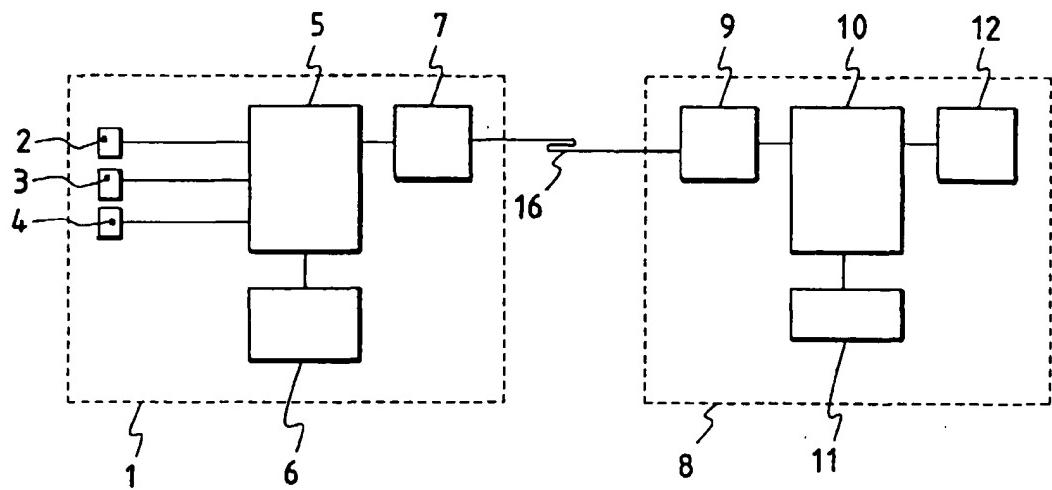


FIG. 2

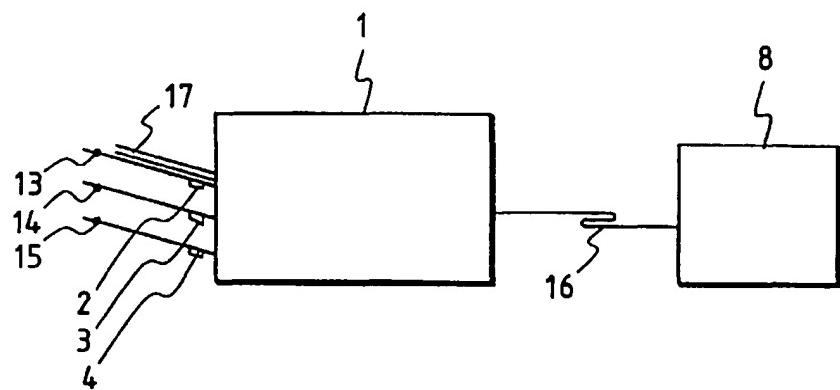


FIG. 3

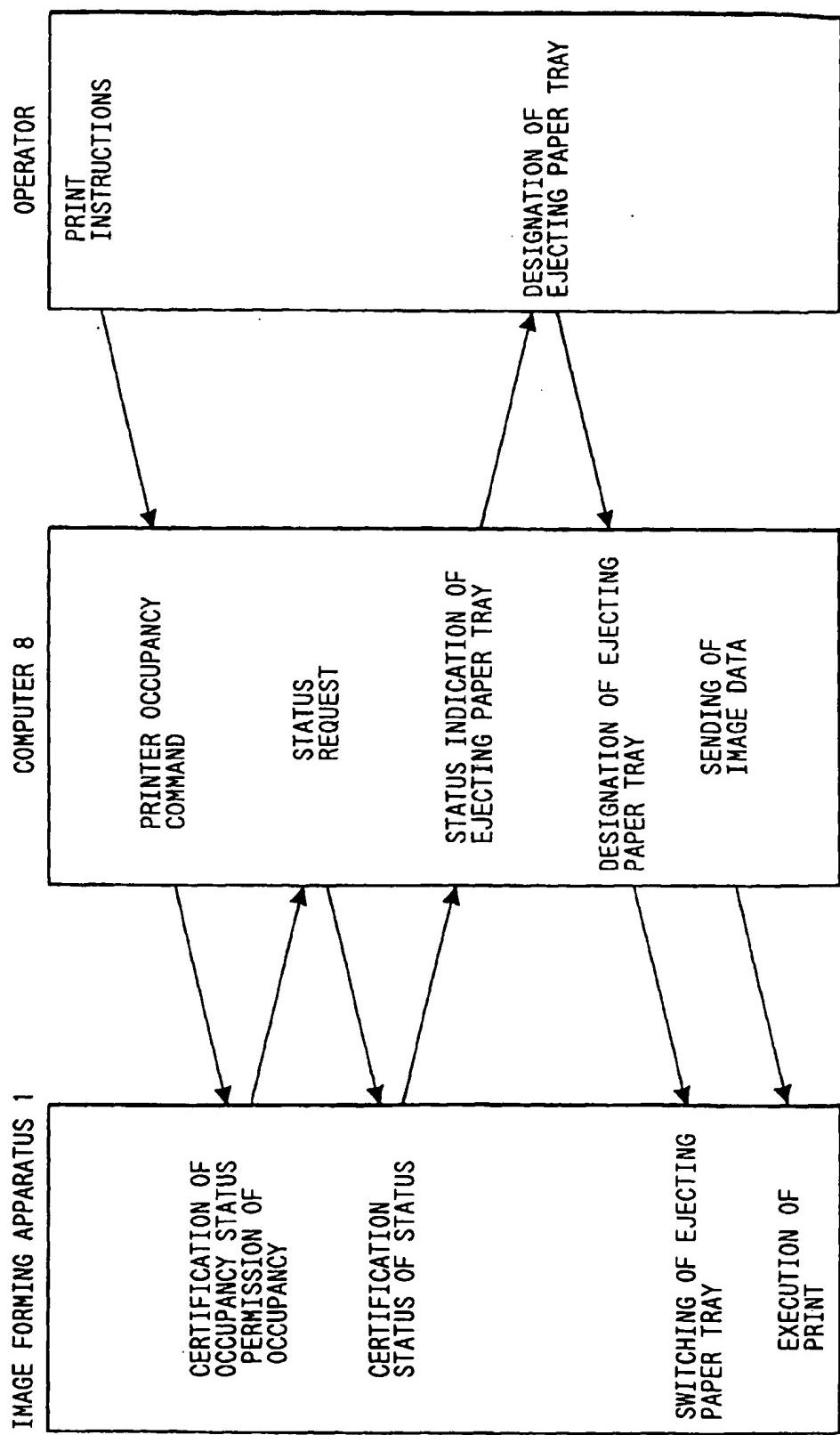


FIG. 4

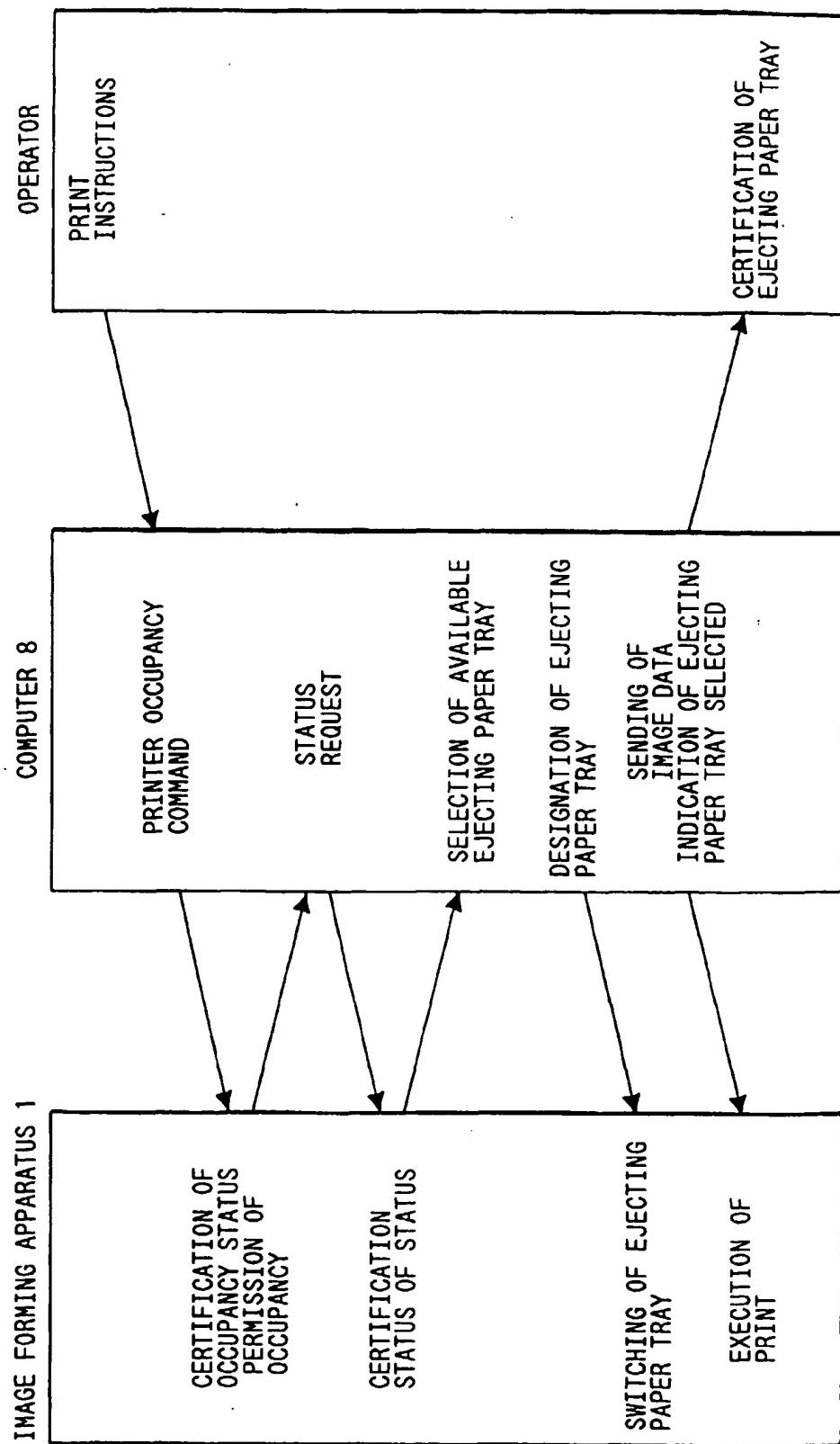


FIG. 5

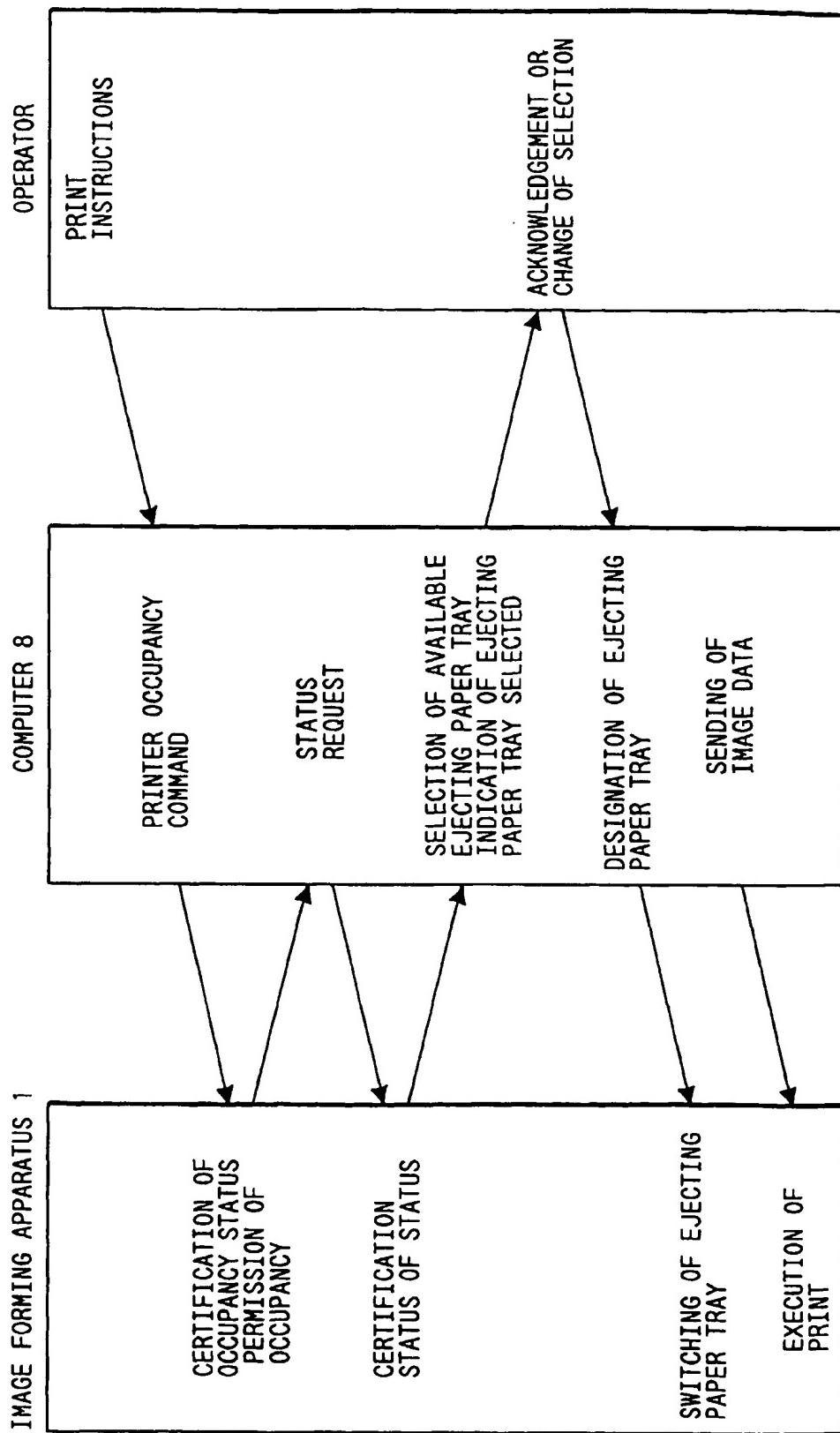


FIG. 6

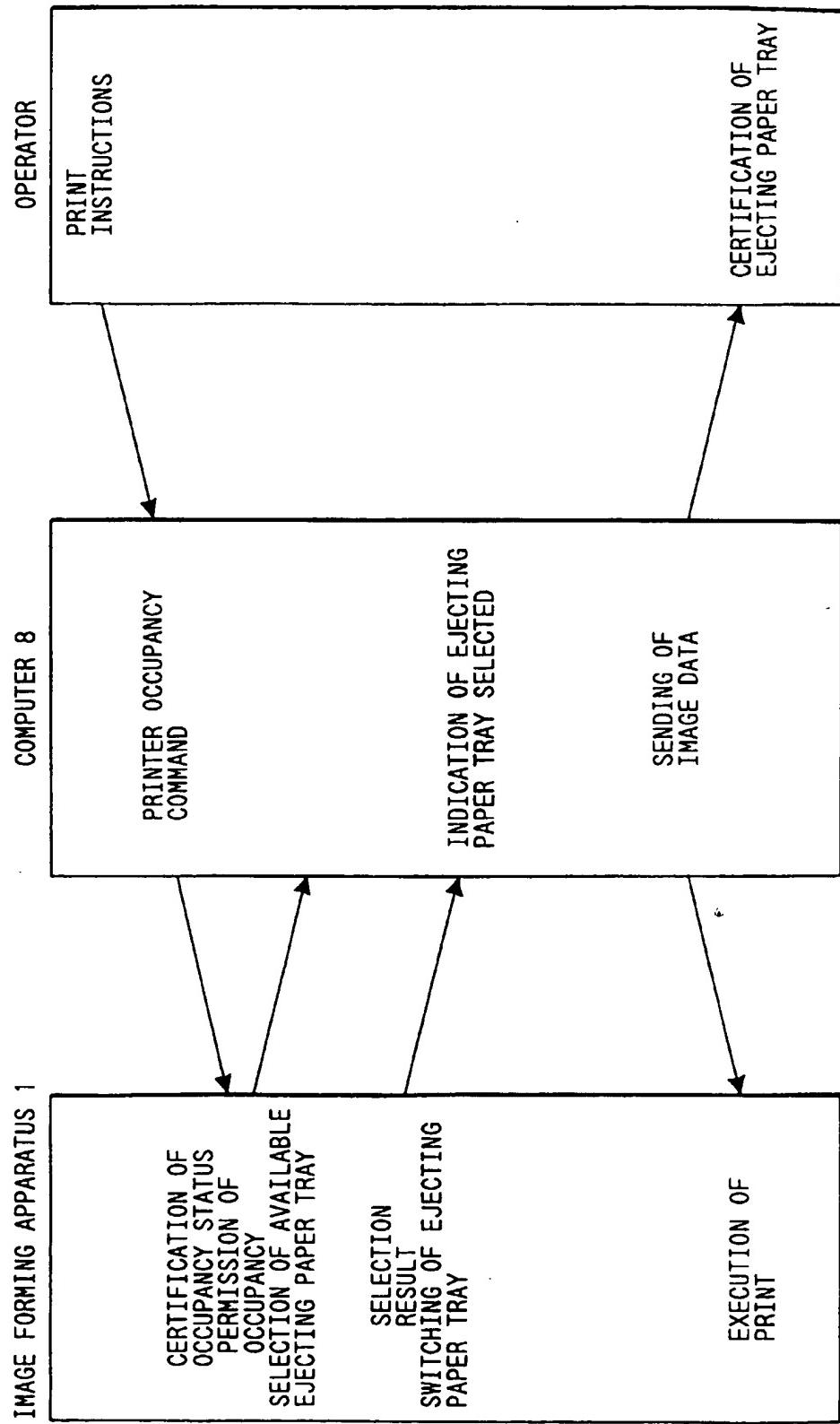
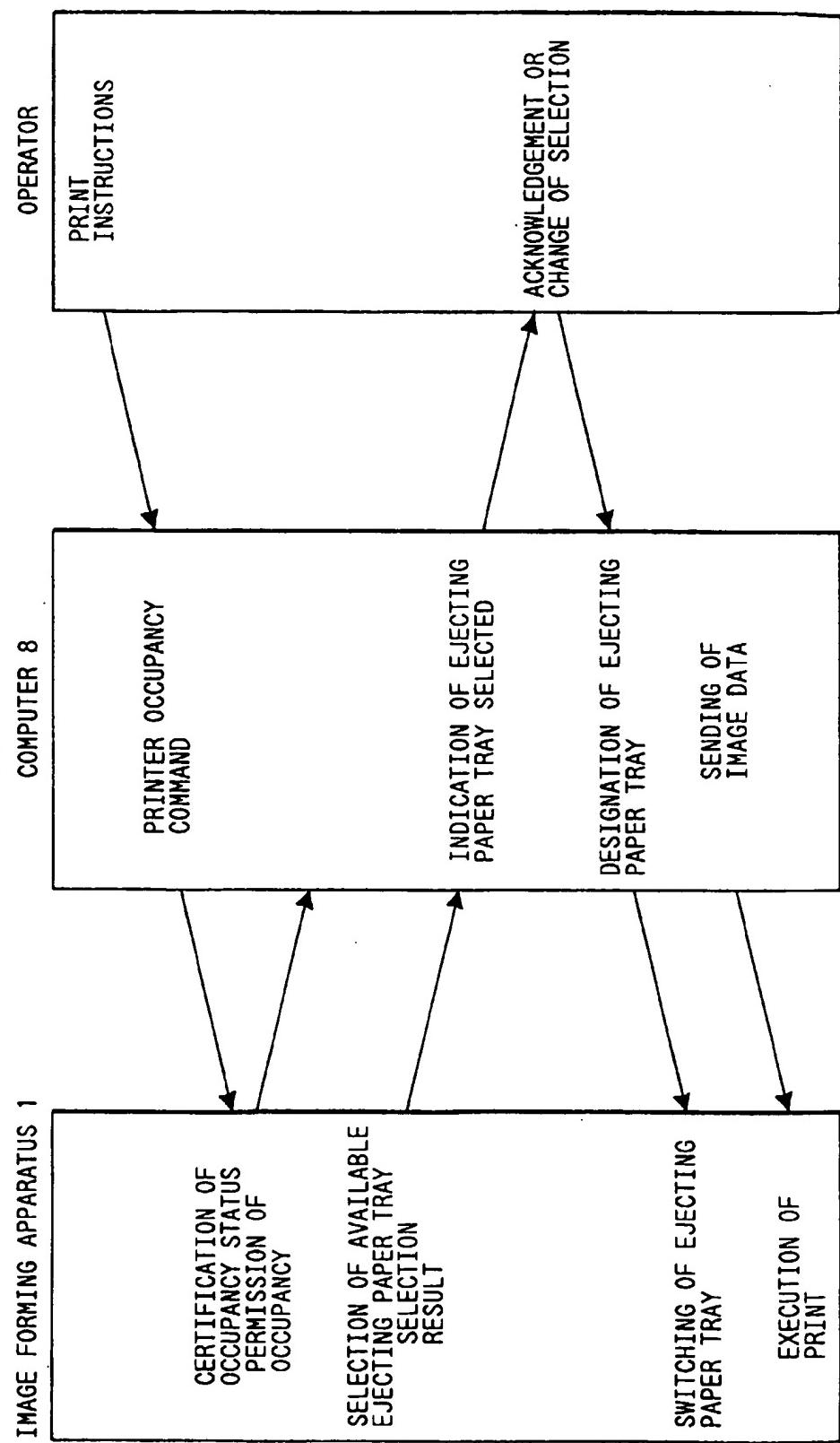


FIG. 7





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 99 12 1248

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	G03G15/00
Y	US 5 075 786 A (IKENOUE YOSHIKAZU ET AL) 24 December 1991 (1991-12-24) * column 6, line 46 - column 12, line 68 * * column 21, line 5 - column 24, line 35; figures 1-11,20 * ---	1,3,4	G03G15/00
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A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 010, no. 189 (M-494), 3 July 1986 (1986-07-03) & JP 61 033436 A (RICOH CO LTD), 17 February 1986 (1986-02-17) * abstract *	1-5	
A	US 5 159 324 A (OHTANI SATOSHI ET AL) 27 October 1992 (1992-10-27) * column 23, line 5 - column 26, line 22; figures 2-6,13-17 *	1-5	
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner	
BERLIN	29 February 2000	Manntz, W	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 99 12 1248

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

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